

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

13TH WARD NEWS

January 2015

LINEA PALMISANO, COUNCIL MEMBER

- West Calhoun
- Linden Hills
- Fulton
- Armatage
- Kenny
- Lynnhurst
- East Harriet

I was sworn in as your representative on the Minneapolis City Council one year ago, and what a year it has been! It is a great honor to serve the neighborhoods of the 13th Ward. I have heard from so many of you in the past year, whether it was e-mailing or calling my office, or whether you ran into me (or my staff—both of whom live in the ward) at a neighborhood meeting, the farmer's market, or one of our thriving local businesses. Please continue reaching out to me in the coming years to let me know your priorities, your concerns and your hope for the city. Our interactions continue to shape my positions and policy efforts, and I want to hear your voice in each decision.

I wanted to take this opportunity to share some of the work we have done this past year, as well as outline my priorities for 2015.

2014: The Year in Review

This year I've worked on a wide variety of issues, from pedestrian safety in West Calhoun to sponsoring a resolution urging the Vikings to install bird-safe glass in their new stadium. As I look at 2014 accomplishments, there are a few I'd consider key:

Housing

One of the most common issues residents contacted my office about last year was the challenge of living next to residential construction sites. We've made real progress on addressing neighbors' concerns. Our first success was the Construction Management Agreement, which detailed the expectations of developers doing work within the City and encoded 25 regulations, such as requiring a pre-construction meeting with neighbors and a sign outside the property during construction, listing an address and contact information. This was followed by the Toolkit for Neighbors of New Construction, a guide for those living near residential construction

projects. By fall, we implemented a series of zoning changes addressing height and setback, among other issues, that will better assure new homes fit within the character of the neighborhoods surrounding them. I was pleased to earn support of both neighbors and industry representatives for these changes.

A Thriving Restaurant Culture

I co-authored a policy to remove and replace restrictive requirements on food-to-alcohol ratios affecting restaurants that serve beer and wine. These changes more effectively deal with neighbors' concerns, such as noise. They also free restaurant owners from ratios that were difficult to meet due to



Council Member Linea Palmisano at a Public Works press conference kicking off construction season, June 2014

changed consumer dining preferences. This new bill accompanied a charter change on the issue (passed by voters with 84% of the vote on the November 2014 ballot).

Airplane Noise

Although there is a lot more work ahead, we have begun chipping away at the massive and complex issue of airplane noise pollution. In November, I delivered remarks to the Planning, Development & Environment Committee of the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) regarding adherence to the Run-

2014: The Year in Review (cont'd from page 1)

way Use System (RUS). The RUS is a list of runways in the order that they are preferred to be used so that planes are sent over less populated areas whenever possible. We want to explore whether more operations can occur over areas in Eagan and Mendota Heights that are less populated and have land use more compatible with air traffic. My goal in the presentation was to share stories of residents and business owners who have been personally impacted by airplane noise in our ward, and to express hope that we can collaborate with the MAC on mutually-agreeable solutions. My office has been actively involved in the Airport Working Group, attends meetings

of the Noise Oversight Committee of the MAC, and continues to press MAC and FAA leaders for changes that will lessen the airport's impact on 13th Ward residents and businesses.

Financial Stewardship

Recent audits in the news highlight the importance of ensuring the wise use of your tax dollars. As the Chair of the City's Audit Committee, I led a detailed review and revision of the City's internal audit function and its processes. We now have a wider scope of what audit can do, and we've attracted top talent

to lead the department. This rebuilt function will enhance our ability to manage risk, optimize efficiencies, reduce costs and strengthen accountability within the City enterprise.

Progress on the Environment

Environmental stewardship continues to be an important priority, from sustainable transportation to bird safety to healthy indoor air. Here are a handful of the environmental issues we've worked on this past year:

- One of the elements of the residential zoning code that I made sure to address was protection of trees. Under the old residential development "points system," builders could clear cut all trees on a property but still get a point toward their design if they planted one new tree in the front yard. Under the new code, builders will receive four points if the total diameter of trees retained or planted equals three caliper-inches per thousand square feet of the lot. Because this is a much higher bar to meet with only new trees, builders will have much greater incentive to retain old growth trees in our ward and across our city.
- Working closely with Public Works staff, I extended the Upton Avenue bikeway from 50th Street south to 62nd Street, then east to Penn. This will enhance the existing bicycling grid, create a connection to Richfield, and offer a calmer alternative to cycling on north-south arterial streets.
- Residential organics collection was expanded to include another drop-off site in Armatage Park, and the City Council passed a 2015 budget to include organics collection city-wide beginning later this year.
- I was proud to serve as the lead author on a resolution urging the Vikings to use bird-safe glass in the new stadium; the resolution was passed unanimously on August 1 and signed by the mayor. The leadership that was demonstrated by the City Council and Mayor Hodges, in coordination with petitions and protests from Audubon and others, is what is keeping the issue and potential solutions in the news.



Palmisano testifying before the Metropolitan Airports Commission about airplane noise pollution in the 13th Ward, November

On the 2015 Budget

When I first sat down to look at the details of Mayor Hodges' proposed budget, I had two priorities: lowering the Mayor's 2.4% property-tax levy increase to provide relief to 13th Ward constituents while at the same time ensuring our budget provides core city services to taxpayers. I believe we succeeded on both fronts.

The Council voted to lower the Mayor's proposed levy increase from 2.4% to 2.1%. This is a savings of approximately \$800,000. During my year in office, the most common concern I've heard from 13th Ward residents is that property taxes are too high. While the City has not increased spending dramatically over the last decade, rising property values in southwest Minneapolis have continued to push more of the property tax burden on 13th Ward residents. I will continue to fight for middle class families trying to make ends meet, as well as for seniors struggling to age in a place on a fixed income. I share Mayor Hodges' goal of growing our city, and we must make an effort not only to welcome new residents but to keep our current residents here.

Ultimately, the budget we passed focuses on core city services—investing in our streets and our safety. It also makes real, measurable progress on addressing racial equity and climate change. I consider these measures imperative as we strive to be a city that leads the nation in preserving our environment, and in which residents in every neighborhood across the city feel safe in their own backyards.

The 2015 budget includes funding for:

- two recruit classes for the fire department and a police cadet class of 18
- 10 more police officers
- four additional 911 operators
- the MPD to partner with the City Attorney's Office and the Domestic Abuse Hotline (an allocation I proposed)
- the implementation of a program for body cameras for police officers
- staff and resources for the Clean Energy Partnership
- the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (bringing the City's contribution over \$10 million for the first time)
- start-up costs and operating funds for the launch of curbside organics recycling
- five additional staff in Construction Code Services to ensure safe and timely services that support residential and commercial development
- multi-modal safety initiatives including durable pedestrian markings for high-use vehicle lanes
- continued development of our network of protected bike lanes
- two new positions in the City Coordinator's office to focus on ensuring equitable outcomes in every City department
- support services to help implement President Obama's executive order on immigration

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MPD Assistant Chief Matt Clark during an evening tour of City Hall led by Palmisano, May 2014

Our 2015 Priorities

Public Safety

Making sure our police force is at the budgeted headcount of 860 and that we're not understaffed is my top priority. As a member of the Public Safety, Civil Rights & Emergency Management Committee, I will continue to push for funding and recruitment of new sworn positions in the MPD, as well as taking a close look at hiring practices that can improve the diversity of our force. Additionally, I will continue to work toward policy and protocol that improves the relationships and trust that our officers seek with those they serve.

Construction Waste

As we take a big step forward environmentally with the introduction of city-wide curbside compost collection, we continue to grapple with what happens to our city's construction and demolition waste. What can we do to divert construction materials, such as the Douglas fir framing from our area's older homes, from the landfills? We have been looking at ways to expand the City's relationship with deconstruction service provider Better Futures Minnesota and seek to pilot some local residential deconstruction projects to gather information. Investigating the next-life opportunities for these salvaged materials locally is the key to developing this initiative successfully.

West Calhoun

I'm excited about the prospect of having (what is supposed to be) the highest ridership Minneapolis station of the Green Line Light Rail extension in our ward. You likely already appreciate the problem of traffic congestion and the pedestrian and cycling challenges that persist in the West Calhoun area. Making our streets safe, inviting and accessible for all users is critical for those who live there, for those who rely on that corridor for transit, and for those who use our city lakes. Before we set out to design the West Lake Station area, we will focus on the upcoming area-wide traffic study by collecting new data and reaching out to all stakeholders for their input.



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Upcoming Ward Office Hours:

Is there a City issue my office can help with?

I'll be at Sparrow Coffee (50th & Penn) on

Tuesday, February 17 from 3-5 p.m.

Contact my office to schedule a meeting slot,
or just show up!